Concord School District
Instructional Committee Minutes

Date: November 28, 2012

Committee members present: Jennifer Patterson, Chair, Clint Cogswell, Barbara Higgins, Betty Hoadley (appointed as a member of the committee for this meeting)

Other Board members present: Kass Ardinger

Administrators and school staff present: Chris Rath, Superintendent; Donna Palley, Assistant Superintendent; Gene Connolly, Concord High School Principal; Tom Crumrine, Assistant Principal; Lise Bofinger, Tamara Hatcher, Judy Batcheldor, Miguel Pires, Tim Beaulieu, Patricia Jared and Linda Stuart

Committee Chair Jennifer Patterson opened the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

1. CHS Science Department

A. Changing the science graduation requirement from 2 to 3 credits.

Tom Crumrine described the proposal to change the high school graduation requirements for science from 2 credits to 3. Currently, students at Concord High are required to take three courses to graduate: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Previously, students were able to choose a 2-course option for graduation: Biology and Physical Science. The Physical Science course was eliminated from the course offerings beginning this school year. The State requires two credits of science: one life science and one physical science. Mr. Crumrine and Lise Bofinger, Science Department Facilitator, recommend the 3-course requirement as appropriate to ensure college readiness.

Board members questioned whether students should be required to take a physics course or whether the third credit could be selected from the courses offered as electives. The high school was not prepared to make a recommendation about the specifics of the third credit, and will return to the Committee in December to present a recommendation. A Board vote will be needed to change the number of credits required.

B. Eliminating Chemistry and its Application from the course offerings

Mr. Crumrine described the rationale for the request to eliminate the Chemistry Applications course at Concord High. This course is not as rigorous as the chemistry course that most students take, and has had a significant failure rate for a number of years. If Chemistry Applications was eliminated, all students would be required to take the same rigorous, heterogeneous chemistry course. This year, there are 14 sections of Chemistry and 3 sections of Chemistry Applications. At the end of September, each of these three sections had an enrollment of 26 students. The department has begun this year to provide extra instructional time for some students taking chemistry, and would
hope to continue this in the future. This request is consistent with changes made in the last several years that have eliminated other tracked classes in science, as well as social studies and math, while providing extra support for students in need.

The Committee voted 4-0 to recommend to the Board that the Chemistry and its Application course be withdrawn from the Concord High School Course of Studies beginning in the fall of 2013.

2. CHS Algebra Report

Tamara Hatcher thanked the Board for its support for changes in the algebra program at Concord High and noted the positive nature of the work the algebra teaching team is doing. Ms. Hatcher noted the elimination last year of the Discovering Algebra course and the move to a common heterogeneous Algebra I course aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Students in need of additional support or extension are receiving extra instruction through participation in small-group extended algebra classes co-taught by a math and a special education teacher.

Ms. Hatcher and members of the algebra team presented information about their new course, which is being designed by the teachers. They showed a math video that was made and used on the first day of classes that uses a problem-solving approach to engage students. The new algebra program stresses real-world problem-solving and opportunities for students to communicate about math.

The algebra team described their competency-based grading system. The teachers are using data from bi-monthly assessments to drive their instruction. The team meets together twice weekly, and is coached by Linda Stuart.

Ms. Stuart presented several iPad apps that are being used by the algebra students.

Principal Connolly described positive data about student achievement in the 9th grade. The focus is on providing rigorous instruction to every student and targeted supports to students in need. He presented information about first quarter grades in freshman English, Algebra, Biology and Geography courses. In all cases, the percentage of students passing the class after the first quarter has increased over previous years, with failure rates of 3% in Biology, 5% in Algebra, 6% in English and 8% in Geography. Most of these failure rates are down from rates at or above 20% in previous years. He believes the new supports added this year have been instrumental to this success.

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, Instructional Committee Chair

Donna Palley, Recorder